

What A Difference 10 Years Makes!

The Transition to the Watershed Approach (Part 2 of a 2 part series)

*By Scott L. Satterthwaite,
Bureau of Water- Watershed Management Section*

When last we left the Kansas Rural Center (KRC), their Clean Water Farm-River Friendly Farm Program was successfully communicating water quality information to farmers and landowners to help them make decisions about water quality protection. The KRC helped individuals assess their water quality situation and develop an action plan, and encouraged them to seek financial assistance through grants or other programs, as needed. The Kansas Rural Center has developed a reputation for their willingness to learn and adapt to the changes in programs, similar to some of their farmer clients in the project. Now they face another challenge, “The Watershed Approach” to clean water farms.

Program Buzzwords - The Watershed Approach

All programs have their buzzwords or slogans, ‘Reduce, Reuse and Recycle’ and ‘Be Wise, Immunize’ among many. National and state water quality restoration and protection needs and non-point source pollution control have evolved into the days of “The Watershed Approach”. The state of Kansas has recognized this need and has officially adopted Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy or WRAPS as the mechanism to achieve water quality goals.

More details are to come in future articles pertaining to WRAPS or you can go to the KDHE Bureau of Water, Watershed Management web page to find a brochure through this link. http://www.kdheks.gov/nps/wraps/wraps_brochure.pdf

Simply put, WRAPS constitutes an organized manner for local, state, private, commercial, federal participants to coordinate and collaborate in addressing water quality, species and habitat, and quantity needs. This action can assist them in receiving funds from multiple sources, yet assure funds are being used effectively.

There are four basic stages in the WRAPS process. The four stages are:

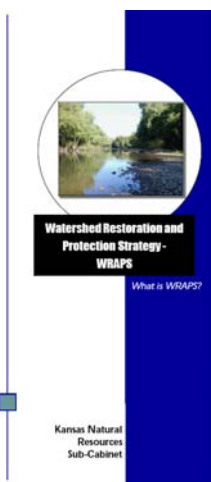
- 1) Development: Stakeholder recruitment, determine interest, document stakeholder decisions.
- 2) Assessment: review watershed conditions and trends, determine management measures in use, develop expectations of the watershed, identify restoration and protection needs and apply watershed models.
- 3) Planning: Establish goals, identify actions that may achieve goals, develop cost estimates, select recommended actions, and identify stakeholder implementation strategies.
- 4) Implementation: Secure resources needed to execute the action plan, monitor and document progress and revise plan as needed.

It is important to note, a WRAPS project can include a watershed the size of a river basin, to a watershed supplying public drinking water from a river, lake or aquifer as decided by the leadership team.

The Kansas Rural Center In “WRAPSODY”

The KRC is developing synergy through EPA Section 319 funding administered by KDHE, to transform their project of working with individual landowner/producers statewide, and to develop a relationship with WRAPS leaders across the state. You can think of it as a “rhapsody,” i.e. - a musical piece needing coordination, cooperation, good listening skills and dedication, with a watershed twist.

Sounds like a simple matter, however, the KRC will be generating most of their grant funds by providing technical assistance to WRAPS committees to assist in implementing the KS River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment thus increasing potential for financial assistance to producers completing this task. This will involve attending WRAPS meetings, offering their services through presentations, website and other mechanisms. Funds will be more targeted to watershed actions to meet a specific water quality goal. Additionally, their actions will be tabulated and compiled to reflect a more holistic approach to accomplishments in protecting and restoring waters of the state.



What About Producers Not In A WRAPS Area?

The State of Kansas's vision is that all watersheds will have some stage of WRAPS. However, this is a slow process, therefore a strategy needs to be developed. The KRC will communicate with producers wanting to complete an assessment outside organized WRAPS areas. But these producers will be encouraged to apply for financial assistance as well as request a local WRAPS be developed through entities such as a public water supply, educational institutions, or conservation districts. Entities such as a public water supply, educational institutions, conservation districts, or others can apply for assistance in any or all stages of the WRAPS process. There will be other service providers working with WRAPS needs as well.

So there you have it. The KRC responding to another challenge because it is important for public funds to be available and knowing funding is needed in Kansas.